

THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

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The subject of the baptism in the Holy Spirit has been a controversial issue in the Christian church right from the day the Holy Spirit was poured out on that memorable day of Pentecost almost two thousand years ago. On that day, orthodox Judaism rejected the experience, and called those who were endued with the power of the Spirit, "drunken men". The masses of Christendom today still hold the same opinion; but about the turn of the twentieth century, there broke out a mighty revival of the power of the Spirit of God. Many received the infilling of the Spirit of God, with the evidence of speaking in tongues.

The nominal churches fought back, but there was no stopping this powerful move of the Spirit of God. However, for some years, this experience was basically confined to what we call the "Pentecostal" churches. But in recent years, many believers within and without the denominational churches began to receive this experience. This resulted in many books being written both for and against the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

There is no denying that many excesses and extremes have been witnessed among "Pentecostal fanatics"; but we must not judge a purported Scriptural teaching only on the basis of a few "fanatics" among those who believe in it. The basis for our decision must be on whether it is Scripturally sound. You see, there is not a single Biblical truth that has not been imitated or counterfeited. So regardless of what people may say, whether pro or con, on any point of Bible teaching, it is incumbent for Bible-believing Christians to

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." (See 1 Thessalonians 5:21)

We therefore make no apology for making a close examination of the doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. In fact, if the experience is what is claimed for it, it becomes very important, not just to study the subject, but if found to be Scripturally sound, to believe it, and to receive it.

In the first three chapters of this book, we have shown some basic Scriptural evidence that God had a beautiful plan-for the New Testament church. When Jesus, the Saviour, was on earth, He not only demonstrated His love and concern for the people of His generation, and especially for the disciples who followed Him, but His vision and concern extended to all succeeding generations, right up to the time when He would return to earth again.

The Bible says that He came not to do His own will, but the will of Him who sent Him. God's will was demonstrated in His love for all mankind. This love prompted Him to give His only-begotten Son, that whosoever would believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16).

The personal presence of Jesus Christ on earth not only provided the sacrifice for sinning mankind, but also gave a promise of God's presence with His people even to the end of the world. This promise is couched in the great commission that Jesus gave to the church:

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, 'All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and. Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.'" (Matt. 28:18-20)

What did Jesus mean when He said He would be with the church "even to the end of the world?" You see, He was speaking of His presence by His Spirit. The promise of God's abiding presence has its fulfilment in the ever present Comforter, the Holy Spirit.

We have shown Christ's promise of the Comforter, and the fulfilment of that promise in the "pouring out" of the Spirit of God on the day of Pentecost. We have also seen that this was a fulfilment of many Old Testament prophecies. The pouring out of God's Spirit upon the early church was not a "filling in" of a blank period of time in early history. Some Biblical commentators would have us believe that God's original plan was the restoration of fleshly Israel at the time that Jesus, the Messiah, was manifested on earth. This was the erroneous concept taught by the Scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day, and that was the basic reason that fleshly Israel rejected Jesus, the Messiah. God had a much greater and glorious purpose for sending His Son into the world. Fleshly Israel had centuries of time to prove themselves worthy of the trust that God had committed to them. They betrayed that trust and failed in the mission that God gave them.

Had they been faithful, the knowledge of the true God would have been made known to the whole world. You see, the sacrificial system with its tabernacle, its services, and its priesthood, all pointed forward to the sinless sacrifice of the Lamb of God. If Israel rightly understood this, they would not have rejected their Messiah. Their rejection of Jehovah's Gift, however, did not prevent, or postpone, the fulfilment of God's plan of salvation for mankind. In Galatians 4:4, Paul says,

"But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law."

God is never caught by surprise, He does not have to change His plan to suit chronological, or geographical situations, or emergencies. Religious or social conditions do not alter God's plan. It is true that sometimes judgment is postponed, or withdrawn, because people repent of their sin. But this is not affecting or altering God's overall plan for the universe. It is important for us to understand this principle, because God had a time planned to send His Son into the world, and nothing that man could do could prevent this. By the same token, God had a plan, and a time, to send the Comforter into the world, and when that time arrived, the Comforter was sent. But most important to us today is to know that the Comforter has not been withdrawn from the earth since He was sent on the day of Pentecost. Praise God!

Just as Israel's rejection of the Messiah did not prevent the coming of the Messiah, so nominal Christianity's rejection of the baptism in the Holy Spirit today, does not prevent God from pouring out His Spirit upon all those who believe and will receive. The prophetic utterances concerning the pouring out of the Spirit of God, and the Spirit's abiding presence to the end of the world, have been fulfilled, and are in effect today.

Many Christians will concede and agree that the Spirit was poured out on the disciples on the day of Pentecost, but then, they say it was only for them in that day. It is not for us today. It is not needed today. The early church needed that power for beginning the new church in a pagan world. They say we have the Bible today, so we do not need the baptism of the Spirit, or the gifts of the Spirit. We have Bible colleges and seminaries where we can train our ministers. Therefore we do not need what the early church needed.

But this is an unscriptural, and an untenable, position to take, for Peter stood up on that memorable day of Pentecost and declared,

"For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." (Acts 2:39)

About 25 years after the Spirit was poured out in Jerusalem, we find Paul addressing the Corinthian church in these words,

"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that, miracles ... " (See 1 Cor. 12:27-30)

In succeeding chapters we shall study concerning the continuity of the gifts of the Spirit in the Christian church. Suffice it to say at this point that God's plan for the pouring out, and the abiding presence of His Spirit, is basic and foundational Biblical truth that cannot be successfully contradicted.

Now we will examine the expression "baptism" in the Holy Spirit. We look at John the Baptist's statement in Matt. 3: 11,

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

Here the word "baptize" is used with reference to water baptism as well as Spirit baptism. Upon investigation, we find the same original Greek word used in both places. Now the Greek term is "BAPTIZO", and is defined by W. E. Vine in his "Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words" as follows,

"to baptize, to dip, used among the Greeks to signify the dyeing of a garment. Used in the New Testament of the rite performed by John the Baptist who called the people to repent that they might receive the remission of sins. It is also enjoined by Christ to be undergone by believers, thus witnessing their identification with Him in death, burial, and resurrection."(P. 97)

So we see the English word "baptize" is a transliteration of the Greek term, virtually unchanged, an appropriation of the word itself. "Baptism" therefore, means a complete immersion, as for example, the dipping of a garment into a dye solution, or a burial of a corpse. The original meaning, however, has been distorted by false teachers who invented new concepts and practices using the terms to apply to their man made traditions. The practice of misapplying and misinterpreting the Scriptures was thoroughly condemned by Jesus. He said to the religious leaders of His day,

"... ye made the commandments of God of none effect by your traditions." (Matt. 15:6)

He further declared that their worship was in vain because they taught the commandments of men as if they were the doctrines of God (V. 7). True Biblical water baptism, therefore, must be performed by immersion, not sprinkling.

And now we carry the meaning into Spirit baptism. The baptism in the Holy Spirit also means a complete immersion. It is an "immersion" in the Holy Spirit, or, the Spirit of God completely immerses the candidate with His power and presence. In this baptism experience, the Spirit takes control of the "unruly member", the tongue, using it to glorify God.

James speaks of the tongue as an "unruly evil", which no man can tame; it defileth the whole body. (See James 3:5-8). But in the experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, God anoints the whole body, including the tongue. Instead of criticism, curses, and condemnation, the tongue is used to magnify the wonderful Name of Jesus! Now James declares further,

"Doth a fountain send forth at the same time sweet water and bitter?" (V. 11)

The implication is clear: the baptism in the Holy Spirit, accompanied by the evidence of speaking in tongues, denotes the candidate's submission to, and motivation by, the Spirit of God. It was said of the believers on the day of Pentecost;

"... We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God." (Acts 2:11)

One of them was a man called Peter. Just a few days prior to receiving this experience, he cursed and swore, disowning Jesus, and denying any association with Him.

What a change! Impetuous, vacillating, cursing, and swearing, this man had an experience that changed his whole life. No doubt the night of denial brought remorse and sorrow to his broken heart. He saw his undone condition. He realized how weak he really was when subjected to trial and testing, but we find him with the rest of the little band of Jesus' followers awaiting the promise of the Comforter. Before this there was contention, strife, and rivalry, among the disciples. Now they were all on the same level! Every one of them realized the need of the "power from on high" that Jesus had promised them.

We take a look at that band of believers. Having witnessed Christ's ascension into heaven, they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olives, which is a Sabbath day's journey from Jerusalem.

"... And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas, the brother of James. These all continued with one accord, ... with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren."(Acts 1:12-14)

From the time of Christ's resurrection, until the Spirit was poured out on the Jewish believers at Pentecost, was about seven days. The Feast of Pentecost, also called the Feast of Weeks, or the First fruits of the Harvest, came fifty days after Passover. (See Ex. 34:22; Lev. 23:15-17). Jesus "was seen of the disciples for forty days" after His resurrection, and since Jesus was in the grave "three days and three nights" after the Passover, (Matt. 12:40), we conclude therefore, that the promise of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, (the Comforter), came seven days after Christ's ascension into heaven.

We now examine carefully what happened when the Spirit was "poured out".

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."(Acts 2:1-4)

Let us notice the conditions, and the sequence of events, as they transpired on this occasion:

1. The believers were all with "one accord" in one place.
2. The house was suddenly filled with the sound of a mighty rushing wind.
3. There appeared cloven tongues like fire, and it sat upon each of them.
4. They were all filled with the Holy Ghost.
5. They all began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

The first thing that we notice is that the believers were all in "one accord". This tells us far more than appears on the surface. To be in one accord would be tantamount to saying that they were in unity and of one mind. Jealousy, envy, rivalry, and competition, had been overcome by a sincere hunger and desire to be filled with the Spirit which would give them "power to witness". They had experienced moments of great fear, disappointment, disillusionment, and despair, before they finally understood that their Lord had to die the sacrificial death on Golgotha's hill. Even though He had risen from the dead, they could not fully grasp the significance of Christ's earthly ministry. Jesus ministered to them another forty days after His resurrection. Finally, just before His ascension to heaven, He commanded them to "tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with the power of the Spirit coming upon them, and making residence within them." (Luke 24:49; John 14:17). Look at that motley crowd! Men and women from all walks of life, mostly poor and ignorant. But they had walked with Jesus many a mile. They had seen His works of love and compassion, of power and authority. They had witnessed His miraculous works of healing and deliverance. Their hopes soared high as He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey amid Hallelujahs and hosannas of the expectant multitudes. They had acclaimed Him King, but yet He made no attempt to seize an earthly throne. They were disappointed and disheartened, and became confused when He spoke of His impending death.

They asked Him,

"... wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6)

It was then that Jesus told them of God's plan for the salvation of the whole world, and that they were commissioned to carry out that plan. But He said you will need the power of the Holy Spirit to fulfil that commission. He said,

I am going away to My Father, but I will send you another Comforter, the Holy Spirit. When you receive the infilling of the Holy Spirit you will be empowered to fulfil the commission I give you. The Spirit will also bring back to your mind the things I have taught you. I have spoken many things to you that you could not understand, but when the Spirit comes, He will lead and guide you into all truth and He will show you things to come.

So leaving the Mount of Olives where Jesus made His departure, they returned to Jerusalem to await the promise of the Spirit.

Then suddenly it happened! They were all gathered together in one accord in one place. There was a sound of a mighty rushing wind. It filled the house where they were gathered together. Then they saw "cloven tongues" like fire resting upon each of them. Almost at the same moment, the Spirit of God was "diffused throughout their souls", (Amplified Version), their tongues were anointed, and animated by the Spirit, and they began speaking in languages they had never spoken before. (See Acts 2:1-4)

Being the Jewish festival of Pentecost, many Jews had come from various countries to observe the feast. The sound of many languages extolling and magnifying the wonderful works of God was heard a great distance, and people by the thousands converged on the unusual spectacle to see and to hear what was happening. Some of the sightseers marveled as they heard the Galilean Jews speak foreign languages, and they were convinced that Jehovah God had spoken to them. But others mocked and scorned, attributing the phenomena to "drunkenness".

Then Peter, now a transformed man, filled with boldness, preached a sermon that resulted in the conversion of three thousand Jews. What a sermon! And what results! All because the Spirit of God had come in such power that men and women trembled under conviction.

We look closely again at the marvelous episode. How many were filled with the Holy Spirit? The Bible says they were ALL filled. How many spoke in other tongues? The record declares they ALL spoke in tongues. But how could they speak in a language they had never learned? Again the Bible answers our question: They spake as the Spirit gave them utterance. Let this fact be well understood, for it will nullify the unscriptural stance of some theologians who claim that the gift of tongues is the natural ability, or gift, that some people have to speak in many foreign languages. These Jewish charismatics did not speak in a language they had acquired by natural means. They spake by, and through, the power of the Holy Spirit as it motivated their tongues.

Furthermore, there is no evidence that those who spoke on this occasion, continued to speak in foreign languages subsequent to this episode.

Undoubtedly God used people after this in Supernatural ways in the spreading of the gospel throughout the world. But bear in mind the facts related with reference to what happened on the day of Pentecost. The record states, "They all began to speak in tongues ... " This would include the women also who were there. The tongues, or languages, were not given only to those who would later go as missionaries to foreign countries, as some people argue.

In fact, it was Peter's sermon, spoken in the common language, not the "other tongues", that convinced the people that what they had seen and heard was the fulfilment of Biblical prophecy, and they were "pricked in their hearts" and said, "What shall we do?" Peter responded,

"... Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." (Acts 2:38, 39)

You see, the gift of tongues was not given primarily for preaching the gospel. In fact this gift is seldom used in this manner. Speaking in tongues is a Supernatural manifestation used primarily in body ministry, along with the accompanying gift of INTERPRETATION for the edification of the body. We will go into greater detail regarding this aspect in another chapter.

The point of importance which we wish to establish here is that they were ALL filled with the Spirit, and ALL spake in tongues, and Peter declared that the whole scenario was a fulfilment of Joel's prophecy. (Joel 2:28)

The other point of importance is the indisputable fact that they spoke in tongues "as the Spirit gave them utterance", or in other words, as the Spirit enabled them. The manifestation of tongues, then, was a result of the motivation and the anointing of the Spirit of God.

The other phenomena manifested here were the "cloven tongues". Why cloven tongues? What was the significance? Keeping in mind that the whole scenario was Divinely initiated and motivated, we contend that God had a purpose in mind by the manifestation of cloven tongues. The Amplified Version says the tongues were "separated". Berry's Interlinear New Testament translates the word as "divided". This is an interesting point. Would it not symbolize exactly what happened right there? Those who spoke in foreign languages had their tongue "cloven", or "separated", or "divided", so that they were enabled to speak in languages other than their common language. Considering all the factors relevant to this phenomena, we conclude, and affirm, that this event, considered by most Bible commentators as the "birthday of the Christian church", was Supernatural in every aspect, thus establishing a Supernatural foundation for all succeeding generations to build upon.

Moreover, we must not leave the scene without taking note of Peter's statement regarding the continuity of the same experience which they had received, to be manifested in the lives of all succeeding generations of believers for Peter declared,

"For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off even as many as the Lord our God shall call." (Acts 2:39)

Therefore, we affirm, that the experience the disciples and the followers of Jesus had at Pentecost is the rightful heritage of every born again believer. It did not cease with those who were the initial recipients. This mighty God sent, God anointed, God empowering, experience is available to all who will believe and receive.

The next incident recorded in the Bible that we wish to consider is found in the eighth chapter of Acts. (See Acts 8:5-25). There we find Philip going down to Samaria and beginning to preach Christ to the people. The record states that the people gave heed to Philip's preaching, and there were many miracles performed. There was "great joy" in that city, and many were converted to Christ and were baptized. The news of the revival in Samaria reached Jerusalem, so Peter and John were sent there. When they arrived and noticed the results of Philip's ministry, they were convinced that it was the work of God. They acknowledged the validity of Philip's ministry, but they discerned that there was something lacking. The converts had truly accepted Christ, and had even been baptized in water in the Name of Jesus Christ, but the apostles discerned that they had not yet been baptized in the Holy Spirit. Then they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

There are some very important factors in this situation that we wish to consider.

The record declares that the Holy Spirit had not yet fallen upon any of them. (V. 15, 16). But they were already converted, and had been baptized in water. How could they be converted, and yet not have received the Holy Spirit? Can anyone be saved or converted without receiving the Holy Spirit? This can be a very difficult question to answer, unless we understand the difference between receiving the Holy Spirit at the time of conversion, and being "baptized" in the Holy Spirit. Proper Biblical interpretation would dictate two separate experiences, one at conversion, and a secondary experience subsequent to conversion. Not that

there are two separate Spirits. But there is a difference in the measure of the Spirit received at conversion, and at Spirit baptism.

Our position is clear. Every person who accepts Christ at the time of conversion receives the Holy Spirit right then and there. However, if we bear in mind that conversion is a "New Birth", or in other words, it is a conception by the Spirit of God when new life begins, then we can understand that at that point in time, the new convert receives the "seed" of new Spiritual life. Truly, new life does begin, but it is in infancy. Paul makes reference to this in Ephesians 2:1,

"And you hath He quickened, (made alive, Amp.), who were dead in trespasses and sins."

In another passage Paul states it thus,

"... if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (2 Cor. 5:17)

But there is a secondary experience, which some theologians call the "sanctification" experience. And it is in this secondary experience that a greater measure, or anointing, of the Holy Spirit is bestowed. This was the case in Samaria. Peter and John did not deny or minimize the conversion of the Samaritan believers, but they did maintain that they needed the baptism in the Holy Spirit, for,

"Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." (Acts 8:17)

But some would interject, "They did not speak in tongues." Can we be justified in coming to such a conclusion? Can we say dogmatically that they did not speak in tongues, when the record says nothing about what happened when they received the Holy Spirit? When nothing is said of what happened, we cannot conclude that the same evidence that was manifested in other instances where the evidence is stated, did not occur at this instance. Certainly the record does not say they did not speak in tongues.

Moreover, when we consider other factors that are brought to light, the evidence becomes overwhelming that there was a supernatural manifestation when the apostles laid their hands upon the people. We notice a man there called Simon. This man had practiced sorcery. He had bewitched the people of Samaria. He was no phony. He was the real thing. The people acknowledged him as the "great power of God". But when he saw Peter and John lay their hands on the people, he said,

"... Give me also this power, that, on whomsoever I lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost."
(Acts 8:19)

The point here is obvious. Something Supernatural must have happened when Peter and John laid their hands on the people or Simon certainly would not have been interested. In fact, Simon must have recognized that what Peter and John had was far superior to what he had. And yet the record of this incident states only that they received the Holy Spirit. Again, we emphasize, something outstanding, yes, even Supernatural, must have happened there to attract a veteran sorcerer. To use this incident to prove that these people did not have the same evidence as on the day of Pentecost, and as at subsequent occasions where it states plainly that they spake in tongues, is a poor rendering, in fact, we could use Biblical terminology which calls this not

"... rightly dividing the Word of Truth." (2 Tim. 2:15)

but is

"... handling the Word of God deceitfully;" (2 Cor. 4:2).

It has also been argued that when Joel prophesied concerning the "pouring out" of the Spirit, he said nothing about speaking in tongues, (Joel 2:28), and therefore it is not the initial evidence of the baptism in the Spirit. However, we find that when Joel's prophecy was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, as Peter declared, that the recipients did indeed speak in tongues. (Acts 2:4). Good logic and objective interpretation would dictate that the absence of a specific reference to a certain manifestation does not prove that the manifestation was not present, unless a definite statement is made to the effect that the specific manifestation was not evidenced.

Attention should be called at this juncture to the terminology used in the Bible with reference to the receiving of the Holy Spirit. A number of different terms are used as, for example, "filled", in Acts 2:4; "received", in Acts 8:17; "falls on", in Acts 10:44; "comes on", in Acts 19:16; "endued with", in Luke 24:49; "sealed", in Ephesians 1:13; "baptized", in Matt. 3:11; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; Acts 11:16; "poured out", in Joel 2:28. Surely it is obvious that all the different terms do not indicate a different experience. No doubt there was a variety in the circumstances, the manner in which it was bestowed, and received, but there is no reason why we cannot conclude that the initial physical evidence would be the same, i.e. speaking in tongues, for we find that in each case where anything is said with regard to an initial evidence, it is said that they "spake in tongues."

In the three instances where this occurs, viz. Acts 2:4,

"... and began to speak with other tongues,"

Acts 10:46,

"... speak with tongues, and magnify God."

Acts 19:6,

"... spake with tongues, and prophesied.",

we note that in each case the first thing they did was "speak in tongues". What followed the speaking in tongues was circumstantial. It neither detracted, or added to, the initial evidence. Tongues speaking is a gift in itself, as is prophesying, or any of the other gifts of the Spirit. Each gift serves a unique purpose. More details and depth in this regard will be given in following chapters.

We now look at the incident recorded in Acts 10:44-48,

"While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all of them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. ..."

The circumstances surrounding this scenario were all directed by God. Peter was instructed to go to the house of Cornelius, a Gentile, to present the message of Jesus of Nazareth, the Saviour of the world. Peter obeyed, and while he was preaching, the Holy Ghost fell on all those who heard his message.

The importance here is: how did Peter, and the Jews who accompanied him, know that these Gentiles had received the Holy Ghost? The answer is given,

"For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God."

Another important point: These Gentiles had not been baptized in water as yet. They received the Holy Spirit before water baptism. And we notice that no hands were laid on them to receive the Spirit. The Spirit "fell on them" while Peter "yet spake" unto them. In fact, Peter later relates the incident to the Jerusalem brethren and said,

"As I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning."
(Acts 11: 15)

So it appears that he did not get very far along with his message when the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles. Peter further declares that this experience was the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and that it was the same gift that was given to the Jewish believers "at the beginning", or at Pentecost. Here are Peter's words,

"Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that He said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as He did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?" (Vs. 16,17)

What God was endeavoring to show Peter was the universality of salvation from sin, and the infilling of the Holy Spirit, to everyone who would believe. Peter had declared on the day of Pentecost that the promise of the Spirit was to "as many as the Lord would call". Now God demonstrates to Peter and his Jewish companions that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was also for the Gentiles. There was only one thing left for Peter to do, that was to administer water baptism to the Gentile believers.

Thus we see the unfolding of God's plan for the proclamation of the full gospel to all nations. Paul put it into beautiful terminology in Ephesians 3:2-6,

"If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery ... which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel!"

There is one more instance where the Spirit of God was given and the context reveals the same truth. It is found in Acts 19:1-6,

"And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, he said unto them, 'Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?' And they said unto him, 'We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.' And he said unto them, 'Unto what then were ye baptized?' And they said, 'Unto John's baptism.' Then said Paul, 'John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people,

that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, Christ Jesus.' When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied."

In this scenario, Paul confronted these disciples of John the Baptist with the question, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" It is important that we note carefully Paul's words. He asked them if they had received SINCE they believed. He did not ask them if they had received the Holy Ghost at the time they believed, but "since" they believed. Berry's Interlinear New Testament translates it "Having believed". In other words, "since you have believed and obeyed John's message which he preached some twenty-five years ago, have you received the Holy Spirit?"

Now let us note what John's message was. It was two-fold: Firstly, it was repentance of sin with water baptism, and secondly, to believe on Him who would come after him, that is, Christ Jesus. Now Paul recognized that these people had believed and obeyed John's preaching which included believing on the Lord Jesus. And this occasion was about twenty-five years after Pentecost. John the Baptist had been executed some time prior to Pentecost. Yet here, in Ephesus, were these Asiatic Jews some of whom had obviously been at Jerusalem years before, had heard John preach, had believed and were baptized. Obviously, they had not been at the place where the 120 were gathered together on the day of Pentecost, for they said they had not heard of the Holy Spirit.

Now Paul's question, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed", does not mean that they had not heard ANYTHING about the Holy Spirit, for John's preaching included the announcement that Christ would follow him, and would baptize with the Holy Spirit." (See Matt. 3:11; Lk. 3:16). What the Ephesian brethren had not heard was that the Holy Spirit, in His gifts, had been given or received by anyone. It would be an erroneous rendering to teach that these disciples, still maintaining allegiance to John's preaching many years after John's decease, did not have the Spirit of God with them. But they had not heard of the gifts of the Spirit that meant to be operative in every believer's life. These disciples like a lot of people today; they have believed in Christ, have accepted Him into their lives, but have not heard of the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the subsequent gifts of the Spirit that are to be operating in the body of Christ. Paul did not minimize the former experience of the Ephesian disciples, but he presented a fuller gospel of water baptism in Jesus' name, and the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

And now we see the initial evidence again, as in former occasions, when the Spirit of God came upon them, was that they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

Some may object to the position we take of speaking in tongue the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, on the grounds that it is not specifically taught in the epistles, and that we cannot establish a point of doctrine on historical evidence such as we have in the book of Acts. We wish to provide some comments from other writers concerning this point. In Unger's "Survey of the Bible", page 258, we find this comment, "The Historical purpose of Luke, (in Act), is also inseparably connected with this theological goal". Thus Unger argues that Luke not only gave historical information, but theological teaching was also intended. Therefore, when Luke states that speaking in tongues was evidenced when believers were baptized in the Holy Spirit, he is making a doctrinal statement as well as an historical statement. Building a doctrinal position on historical Biblical precedent re: speaking in tongues as the initial physical evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, would not only be permissible, but recommended as logical Biblical interpretation.

The Acts of the apostles is the normative record and pattern of the normative primitive church. Therefore the apostolic experience would be the normative model for all Christians. Peter declared that the speaking in tongues at the time of the baptism in the Holy Spirit was a fulfilment of prophecy. That evidence in itself makes it a valid experience. But Peter declared that the promise of the Spirit was not only for those primitive disciples, but it was for "all whom the Lord God would call". In a book, "Pentecostal Perspectives", we find this statement, "First century Christians based their experience on the doctrine of the apostles, (See Acts 2:42), and continued steadfastly in those doctrines so much so that a complaint arose against them that they had filled Jerusalem with their doctrine. The cumulative evidence of the Scriptural experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit corroborates the doctrine of speaking with other tongues as the normative experience."

In summarizing this chapter, we find some basic indisputable facts:

1. The experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was a fulfilment of prophecy.
2. The experience is provided for every believer.
3. It is a crisis experience subsequent to the new birth.
- 4, It was given to "endue with power to witness".
5. It is an added dimension in Spiritual living.
6. The initial physical evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues.

May the God of all wisdom, knowledge, and power, grant understanding and faith to the reader so that the blessed promise of the Holy Spirit, and the accompanying Gifts of the Holy Spirit, may be your portion.

(NOTE: This booklet is chapter four of the larger publication entitled The Holy Spirit.